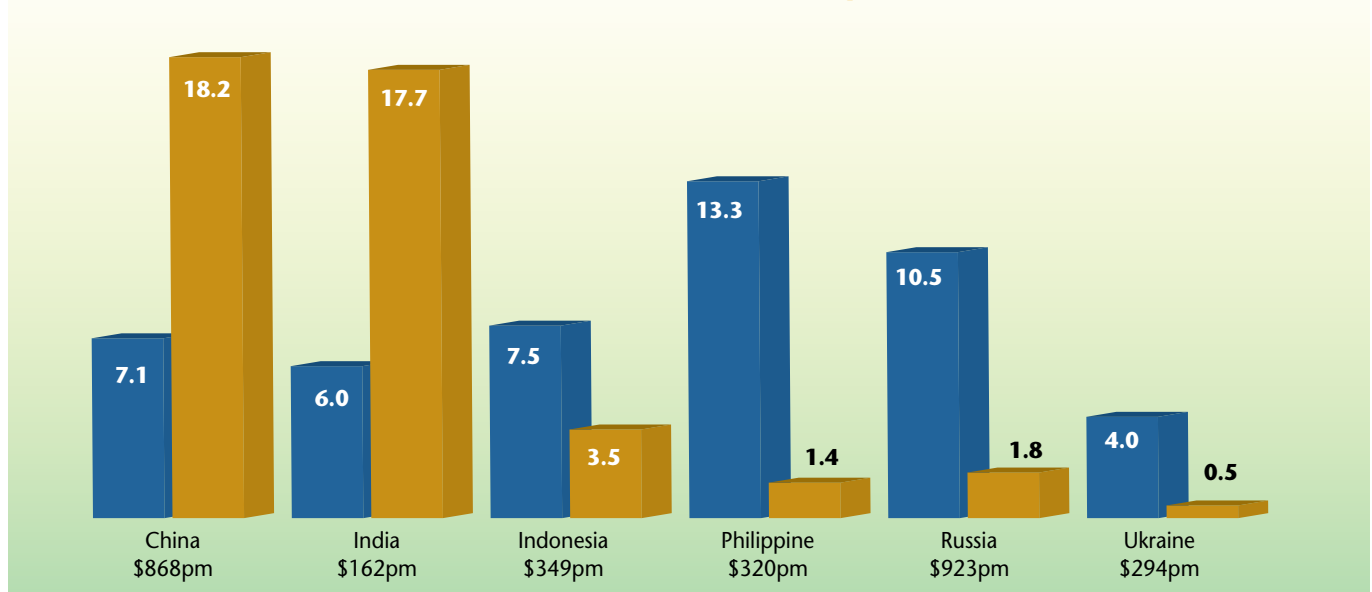


% of Seafarers Vs % of Global Population



The India moment

The global demand for Indian seafarers is set to rise

India's share of global seafaring population is only about 8 per cent, whereas its share of global population stands at 18 per cent. It is 'India's moment' to increase its share in the seafaring population, since it has all the right ingredients of a robust education system, young population and low per capita income. As can be seen with the graph, other countries have been able to do much better due to an early start.

In my view, India has next 10-20 years to increase its share up to 20 per cent of the global market. Among the few things which have been in India's favour is the resolve shown by Indian seafarers during the pandemic to continue to operate the ships in a professional manner. The Ukraine/Russia conflict has also opened gates for many new players to enter into the Indian market.

Ship owners operate nearly 80 per cent of the global ocean-going ships on their own, by using manning agents in countries in proximity. Therefore, East Europe developed primarily as an officers' market and the Philippines filled in the requirement for ratings and junior officers. Since India neither had any ship owning nation in proximity nor own tonnage, this market was not tapped by ship owners. The Indian seafaring market was primarily developed by few large ship managers from the mid-1980s onwards; therefore, nearly 80 per cent of Indian seafarers work with Ship Management companies. Anglo-Eastern was one of the



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first companies to open its own training centre in the early 1990s, followed by its own cadet training academy in 2008.

As the coastal trade develops in India, more seafarers would be needed to cater for local ship owners. The demand from foreign ship owners is likely to increase due to the aging seafarer population in Europe and to manage the supply the maritime training institutes and trainee berths are also likely to increase.

However, unlike Filipino seafarers, the Indian junior officers and ratings are paired more with Indian senior officers. Hence the key roadblock in increasing the share of Indian seafarers would be lack of Indian senior officers. Since today's officers take loans early in life, it is difficult for them to take 18 months unpaid leave, to write the examination for senior officers.

This could be resolved if the Marine Department allows students to write one function (say, Navigation/ cargo work, etc) on completion of every six months of sea time. The classroom study, written and oral exam could be completed in a four months period. This would allow seafarers to join back within four months of leave and they could obtain superior certificates once they complete all functions, without going on a long unpaid leave. Further by obtaining one function early in their career they would be better and more sought after seafarers in a globally competitive market. ♦